Donna Hole

Preservation Planning in Annapolis
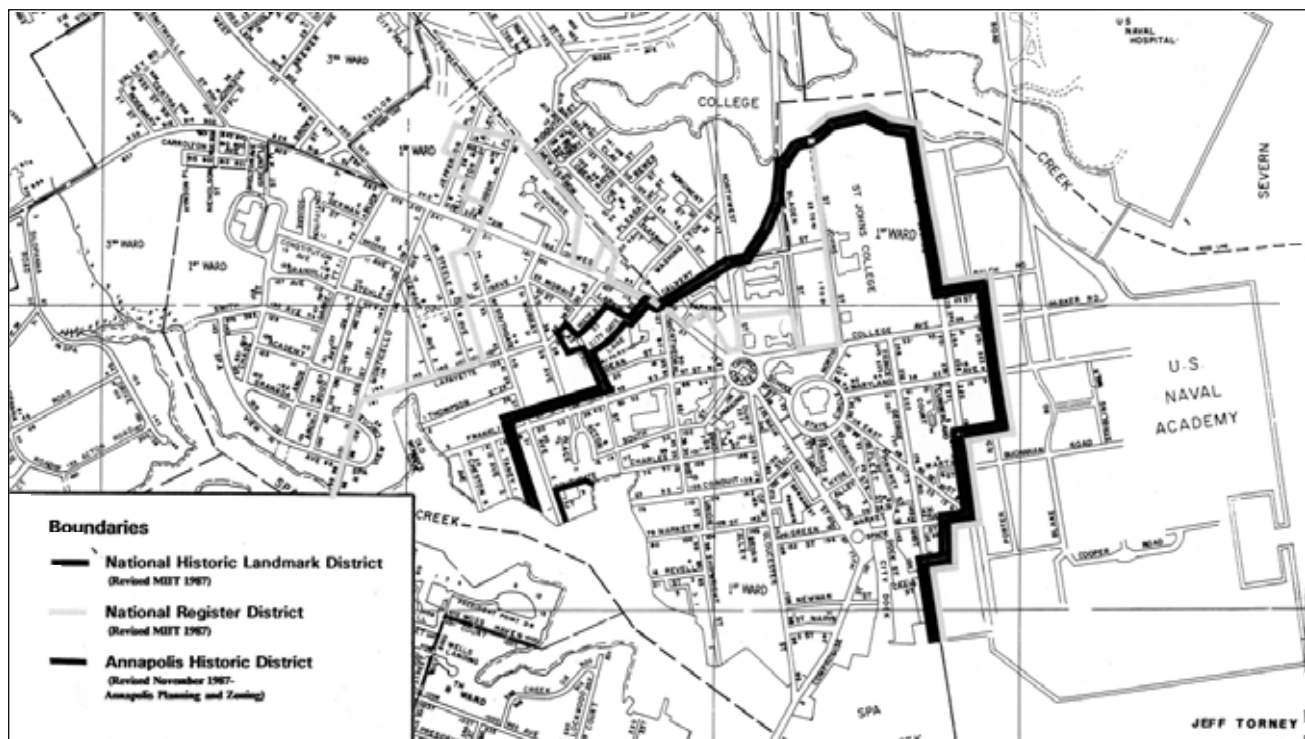## A Community Commitment, A Community Task

Map of Annapolis historic districts courtesy Department of Planning and Zoning, City of Annapolis, Maryland.

Located approximately 20 miles east of Washington, DC, and south of Baltimore in the land of "smart growth," the city of Annapolis, now in its fourth century, occupies slightly less than seven square miles in Anne Arundel County; and, it is one of only two incorporated municipalities. Annapolis has been the county seat since 1696, the provincial seat, and subsequently, the state capital of Maryland since 1695. It has been the home of the United States Naval Academy since 1845. Designated a national historic landmark in 1966, the city passed its own historic district zoning in 1969, placing it in the ranks with the nation's mature historic districts. The boundaries of the National Register historic district, which corresponded with those of the national historic landmark district, were revised in 1984 to recognize the city's late-19th- century and early-20th-century suburbs adjacent to the district. Annapolis became a Certified Local Government (CLG) in 1985.

Surprisingly, it was just eight years ago, after persistent lobbying on the part of local preservationists and residents, that the city council authorized the creation of a full-time, professional historic preservation planner in the Department of Planning and Zoning, with the specific tasks of managing the existing historic district and the Certified Local Government program. With strong financial support from the Maryland Historical Trust and the City of Annapolis, the CLG embarked on an intensive historic buildings survey for the largely undocumented structures in the historic district. Preservation planning initially appeared to be limited by city officials and many residents to the locally designated historic district, the boundaries of which have not changed since drawn in 1968 to correspond with those of the national historic landmark district.

A different approach was taken when the residents of Eastport, a historic maritime community across Spa Creek from Annapolis that was annexed by the city in 1951, became inter-

Boundaries

— **National Historic Landmark District**
(Revised MHT 1987)

— **National Register District**
(Revised MHT 1987)

— **Annapolis Historic District**
(Revised November 1987-
Annapolis Planning and Zoning)

JEFF TORNEY

Eastport Overlay Zone, Annapolis. Photo by Dirk Henrik Geratz.

Nicholson and the Assembly directed Beard to develop what is believed to be the first baroque town plan in America.[2] The plan, based on two circles, and radiating axes terminating at principal vistas, established the sites for the town's principal landmarks with a clear hierarchy. State Circle, the larger of the two and on the highest elevation, was set aside for a state house; and Church Circle was smaller and at a lower elevation. Laid over Beard's 1684 plan, the result was unique and continues to define Annapolis. When the colony figured prominently in the founding of our nation and the Maryland State House provided a venue for the Continental Congress when it had to flee Philadelphia, Annapolis would become nationally significant.

Preservation in Annapolis

It was the survival of the unusual Nicholson/Beard plan, and the homes and public buildings associated with the American Revolution and its leaders into the late-19th century that spawned the preservation movement in Annapolis. Until the 1980s, preservation planning, with the exception of an early, advisory-only Board of Review established by city council, remained the mission of private institutions like St. John's College and Historic Annapolis, Inc. St. John's College purchased historic properties for faculty residences and educational use, and provided "sanctuary" for several houses that were threatened with demolition by moving them onto campus. The college purchased the William Buckland designed Hammond-Harwood House to develop a decorative arts program in the late 1920s which was subsequently led by R.T.H. Halsey, founder of the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.[3] The relocated Charles Carroll House, the Barrister House, and the Reverdy-Johnson House were restored to serve the college as admissions and alumni association offices respectively. Preservation remained in the hands of private institutions with the formation of The Company for the Restoration of Colonial Annapolis in 1935 and its successor Historic Annapolis, Inc.

Historic Annapolis, Inc. was founded in 1952, following a meeting convened by Dr. Richard Wiegle, president of St. John's College. Like its counterparts throughout the country, Historic Annapolis, Inc. brought to the historic preservation movement the leadership of strong individuals; in this case, St. Clair Wright. She was instrumental in eventually shifting the emphasis

ested in their community's rich heritage and sought protection for its resources. With the community's support, the Department of Planning and Zoning used down-zoning to protect the waterfront maritime trades from being displaced by waterfront residential development. To preserve the 19-century scale and vernacular dwellings of this workers' community, the residents and business owners expressed a preference for a residential conservation overlay zone that is managed by the Planning and Zoning Department staff rather than by an independent commission. Then as now, when the subject of the downtown's Historic Preservation Commission is raised, the retort is "You're fine as long as you stay on your side of the bridge." How did these contrasting views of preservation develop and can and how do we cross the bridge?

Early History of Annapolis

The history of town planning in Annapolis has its roots in the 17th century. Shortly after Francis Nicholson arrived in the Maryland colony in 1694 as the provincial governor, he and the Provincial Assembly effectively transferred the seat of government from St. Mary's City to "Arundell Towne" on the Severn River, a location more central to settlement and trade patterns and dominated by Protestant rather than Catholic settlers. Nicholson also arranged for the name to be changed to Annapolis in honor of Anne, the Princess Royal, and a devout Protestant. Originally laid out in 1684 by Richard Beard, deputy surveyor of Anne Arundel County, Ann Arundell Town consisted of an emerging rectilinear plan over which a grid of lots was subsequently platted.[1] Influenced by 17th-century Italian and English town and garden planning,

from rescuing endangered individual properties like the William Paca House, to preserving a district of houses and commercial buildings using the tools of government, such as national historic landmark designation to local historic area zoning.

Although it would appear that preservation has become a community ethic and is carefully considered as part of each planning initiative and development project, the preservation of the historic scale—the residential, commercial, and maritime neighborhoods surrounding the district—is not always applied consistently. This became clear when comprehensive planning was initiated for the first decade of the 21st century.

Preservation Planning 2000

When the century closed and the city completed its collaborative, thematic, and values-driven visioning that resulted in the award-winning 1998 Annapolis Comprehensive Plan, preservation did not emerge as a separate theme.[4] Ann Fligsten, then president of Historic Annapolis Foundation, and Harrison Sayre, vice chairman of the Historic Preservation Commission, were the only representatives from the preservation community on the Citizens' Advisory Committee that worked with city staff and consultants Wallace Roberts Todd. As the process moved forward, Ms. Fligsten became conscious of the fact that preservation was not going to become either a separate component or linked to the mandated elements, such as land use, transportation, housing, sensitive areas, or community facilities. According to Daria Hardin, the planner who staffed the Citizens' Advisory Committee and consultants, there was a consensus that preservation "was a given." The historic district emerged as a recognized resource that is important to

Cornhill Street, Annapolis. Photo by Traceries.

defining the city's character. The plan reveals that recognized historic resources require a high level of urban design "to strengthen the visual image," and provide the leverage for economic development by using the recognized heritage area status under the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority. Preservation was not a problem, and the Citizens' Advisory Committee was focusing on problems that would need to be addressed, such as housing, transportation, and economic development, in the next decade. Preservation planning had become compartmentalized, even though the city's target zone for economic development, Inner West Street, bisects the two neighborhoods that were added to the National Register historic district in 1984, and will certainly involve demolition of contributing structures that reflect the growth of Annapolis' earliest suburbs.

That point of view and the limitations of the plan came home to roost within a year of the plan's adoption when the city acquired property on Inner West Street to construct a parking facility that would have resulted in the demolition of five structures evaluated as contributing to the National Register historic district. Once again, the community's preservation leadership, ranging from former historic district commissioners to neighborhood residents from the local district and "across the bridge," is back in the trenches. Fortunately, the debates of the last generation and the presence of a strong preservation ethic to protect the historic district had created an appropriate environment for further education and planning prior to proceeding further with the project. At this writing, a citizens' committee appointed by the mayor is gathering information regarding the significance of the properties and the feasibility of including them in a mixed-use project. While preservation planning may not have figured strongly in the 1998 Comprehensive Plan, the 1984 effort to enlarge the National Register district along Inner West Street and the city's subsequent 1985 Inner West Street study, which identifies the historic resources as important to defining the street and character of the area, will hopefully provide the tools to meet the 1998 plan's goals in the urban design element. These goals are "to reinforce the urban design character of the historic core and link it to other parts of the City," and, "to develop and implement a long-range plan for urban design improvements to Annapolis' major gateway entrances and corridors."[5]

Conclusion

Because preservation "was a given" in the 1998 Annapolis Comprehensive Plan, preservation planners and the community can continue to use existing tools, such as the studies mentioned above as well as the Historic Preservation Commission's general authority to order studies and surveys and designate landmarks, until 2004 when preservation will become part the 2004 comprehensive plan, according Jon Arason, director of the Department of Planning and Zoning. Planners and preservationists agree that a separate preservation plan would raise awareness and provide a framework for future projects that involve historic resources.

Notes

1. Anthony Lindauer, *From Paths to Plats: The Development of Annapolis, 1651 to 1718* (Annapolis, MD: Maryland State Archives and Maryland Historical Trust, 1997), p. 10.
2. John Reps, *Tidewater Towns* (Williamsburg, Va.: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1972), p. 127. Edward Papenfuse, Maryland State Archivist, demonstrates that archeological evidence suggests that was the beginning of a grand baroque scheme in St. Mary's City, in his monograph, "Doing Good to Posterity": *The Move of the Capital of Maryland From St. Mary's City to Ann Arundell Towne, Now called Annapolis* (Annapolis, MD: Maryland State Archives and the Maryland Historical Trust, 1995), pp. 5-7.
3. Ann Jensen, "The History and Evolution of Preservation in Annapolis," *Historic Preservation Forum* 13 (Fall 1998): 30-36.
4. The Maryland Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Act of 1992 did not require a preservation element although historic and archaeological sites can be included under the required Sensitive Areas element. Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 66B, Section 3.05.
5. City of Annapolis, Annapolis Comprehensive Plan (Annapolis, 1998), prepared by Wallace Roberts Todd, pp. 90-91.

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Community Consensus Planning for Battlefield Preservation

This essay deals with preservation planning for Civil War battlefields and sites; however, these techniques will work for other types of historic preservation projects as well. All of the projects with which this author has been associated developed, ultimately, out of a partnership between a non-profit entity and a government agency. Although these preservation efforts may not have begun as a partnership, they ended up that way.

The point to this essay is that the preservation planning process in and of itself is a catalyst for the preservation of a given site. By making the effort to go through the process, a preservation group takes a huge step forward to insure the site's preservation. The successful process is led by either a local non-profit or a local government agency to insure that it will be successful. The impetus needs to be local and include an element of community consensus building. Successful battlefield preservation efforts are achieved through community consensus-based planning and strong local leadership. There is, of course, no magic formula, but the process draws upon the support of the general public and that of local governments. Efforts using community consensus-based planning have been highly successful.

A successful process for preserving a Civil War site involves three components: nominating the property for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, creating a preservation and management plan, and developing an interpretive program. The order in which these components are completed is not critical but a successful project achieves all three. Exactly how planning projects progress is dependent upon the initiator of the effort, but the process that each site goes